

Washington, D.C. Congressman Sanford Bishop (D-GA), along with Congressmen Steve Buyer (R-IN), Gene Taylor (D-MS), and Jeff Miller (R-FL), recently introduced HR 5609, a bill to provide 180 days of transitional health care for soldiers in the United States Military who choose to voluntarily separate from active duty and join the Selected Reserves (SELRES).

“The brave men and women who join the ranks of our proud military deserve every consideration upon their release from active duty. Transitional health coverage would provide a great deal of comfort to members and their families as they move to civilian life,” said Congressman Bishop.

Currently, when an active duty service member is involuntarily separated from the Army, he or she is afforded 180 days of transitional health care at no cost. Conversely, service members who have served honorably and leave active duty at the end of their contractual agreement with the Armed Services are not afforded free transitional health care. These service members represent a trained pool of military talent available to serve our Army in a different capacity, and the bill introduced by Congressman Bishop provides an incentive for them to continue serving our country.

“Without dedicated and experienced Guard and Reserves forces, it is impossible to keep the threat of terrorism at bay. Retaining these highly skilled men and women is paramount in maintaining our nation’s security. We need to provide our service members an incentive to continue serving.”

If passed, the legislation would provide 180 days of transitional health care to service members who leave active duty at the end of their contractual agreement and enter the SELRES. Transitional health care would also be provided to service members’ immediate families. By encouraging the retaining of skilled service members in the SELRES, the bill aims to bolster our Armed Forces in fighting the War on Terror, provide long-term savings in training costs, and allow separating service members a measure of comfort knowing their families will have health care coverage.

After its introduction, HR 5609 was referred to the House Committee on Armed Services.